

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The claims of this application have been amended in order to address issues raised in the Official Action of November 3, 2005, to clarify the claims and to precisely state the relationship between discharge voltage and flow rate of the reactive gas. More specifically, independent claims 1, 2 and 8 have been amended consistent with the description found in Section [027] of the description of the invention. A clarifying amendment is made to claim 13.

New claims 15-27 have been added directed to preferred aspects of the disclosure. In new independent claims 15 and 16 the step of determining a relationship between a reactive gas flow rate and a discharge characteristic of a sputtering apparatus follows the description in Section [028] of the specification and Figure 1. The step of determining the gas flow rate conditions capable of providing mass blanks with the indicated transmission variation and phase shifting amount variation is in Section [029] of the specification. The step of forming the half-tone films is based on Sections [031] and [032] of the description.

In new claim 15, the step of determining the target composition is also based on Section [032] of the description and the step of carrying out the reactive sputtering using a target is based on Section [034] of the description. In claim 16, the step of determining compositions of a plurality of different targets follows Section [032] of the description and the step of carrying out reactive sputtering is based on Section [034] of the description as well as claim 2.

Claim 17 follows the description in Sections [029], [032], Figure 1 and the example.

Claim 18 follows the description of Section [024] of the specification.

Claim 19 follows the description of Section [024] of the specification.

Claim 20 follows the description of Section [028] and Figure 1 of the specification.

Claim 21 follows the description of Section [027] of the specification.

Claim 22 follows the description of Section [033] of the specification.

Claims 23 and 25 refer to mass production which is discussed in Section [015] of the description.

Claim 26 follows the description of Section [015] of the specification.

Claim 27 follows the description of Section [015] of the specification.

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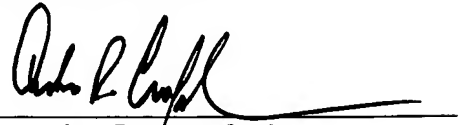
The amendments made to the claims serve to clarify the invention and distinguish the claims from the disclosures of Ozaki U.S. '778. Favorable consideration of these claims is requested.

Should the examiner require further information, please contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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